

**HABS No.** CA-2651

Mission Motel  
9235 MacArthur Blvd.  
Oakland  
Alameda County  
California

HABS  
CAL  
1-OAK,  
14-

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

**Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Western Region  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California 94107**

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
MISSION MOTEL

HABS  
CAL  
1-OAK,  
14-

HABS No. CA-2651

Location: 9235 MacArthur Boulevard  
Oakland, Alameda County, California  
  
Assessor's Parcel Number 46-5484-10-2  
  
USGS Oakland East Quadrangle (7.5'),  
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates 10.574000.4178700

Present Owner: Oakland Community Housing Inc.,  
405 14th Street, Suite 400  
Oakland CA 94612

Present Use: Vacant at time of inspection; demolished January 1996

Significance: The Mission Motel, built in 1938 with additions in 1945 and 1951, was an outstanding example of a California regional theme motel of the interwar and early postwar years. It was the largest, most elaborate, and most substantially constructed of the many early motels and auto courts that lined the main highway through Oakland before the construction of the MacArthur Freeway in the mid-1950s. It was one of the first Oakland establishments to use the name "motel." Particularly in the 1938 and 1945 buildings, great attention was paid to materials and workmanship: mission tile roofs, decorative wood posts and beams, brick chimneys, white stuccoed walls, canales and chimney pots, decorative exterior fireplaces and niches, interior and exterior fireplaces, and substantial tile masonry and reinforced concrete construction. The Mission Motel remained viable in the 1960s and 70s by converting motel units into apartments.

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### **A. Physical History**

1. **Dates of Erection:** The first unit of the Mission Motel, the central keyhole-shaped court, was built in 1938 under building permit A72250, issued April 26 to owner A.K. Wright, and was originally valued at \$27,000; plans are on file with the City of Oakland. A similar, somewhat smaller, U-shaped court was added north of the original in 1945 (permit B 7904, 10/05/45; \$46,000). A woodframe office and residence building (apparently an owner or manager's unit, with small quarters for an office attendant) at the center street front of the property was built later the same year (permit B9002, 12/27/45, \$17,000). Additions of two paired wings of motel units and storefronts at the north and south ends of the property were made in 1951 under permits B34246-7 and B35576-7, completing development of the approximately 2.7 acre site. (See also 6, Alterations and additions.)

2. **Architect/Builder:** Neither architect nor builder is named on the 1938 plans or permit. Plans are captioned "Proposed Motel or Auto Court for Mr. & Mrs. W. Wright," and appear professional in style and content, but are unsigned. The Wrights' daughter Bernetta Johnson (see III. C., Interviews) remembered her father working with "a draftsman by the name of Dixon" who, she said, also designed two Spanish-style houses for the Wrights. The permit for the one of these houses identified so far, 1817 Leimert Boulevard, also does not name a designer. Bernetta Johnson says her father "told the architect what he wanted," both for the motel and for the Leimert Boulevard house, which she says was based on a picture her father brought back from Spain.

It seems reasonable, though not proven, that "Dixon" was Walter W. Dixon (b.1883), an active Oakland designer of houses and publisher of pattern books and The Home Designer and Garden Beautiful magazine. A 1928 biography in F.C. Merritt's History of Alameda County (p.212-3) describes his "'House Plan Service,' including a complete line of stock plans... Mr. Dixon maintains that the same selling principles must be applied to houses that are used in any commercial business. Features that attract a buyer should be incorporated in the plans... little features that suggest and give the feeling of the larger, more expensive home... He has designed and planned over three hundred homes built by R.C. Hillen in Oakland, the Spanish, Italian, Norman and Swiss Chalet types being frequently used... Mr. Dixon's principal clients are building and loan societies, small banks, tract development companies and lumber companies, and his designs have been successfully used in Florida, Texas and other states." The Spanish style, skillful use of suggestive details, and Texas and Florida connections are all consistent with the Mission Motel.

Permits for the 1945 north court and duplex identify the builder of both as Sisto Rasori of 55 New Montgomery Street, San Francisco, the engineer for the north court as J.R. Guptill of 5936 MacArthur Boulevard, Oakland, and the architect for the residence as "none." Neither Rasori nor Guptill appears familiar to researchers of Oakland buildings. Builder of the 1951 additions was James E. Fuller of 3465 Encina, just uphill from the project site; no designer is named.

3. **Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses:** The original owners and developers are listed on the 1938 plans and permit respectively as "Mr. and Mrs. Wright" and "A.K. Wright." They are identified through city directories as Wilmer and Angela Wright, Wilmer being a wholesale meat merchant on 98th Avenue, a few blocks downhill from the motel site. They resided first in the Elmhurst neighborhood near the business, and by 1934 on Leimert Boulevard near the affluent suburb of Piedmont, not at the Mission Motel. The original motel site occupied most of two 149' by 258' lots in the Frank Silva Tract, previously only minimally improved, on a mostly rural and undeveloped section of Foothill Boulevard between Oakland and San Leandro.

The building name has always been Mission Motel. The Wrights' daughter said her father "was a kind of financier-developer, and thought Oakland didn't have any decent motel. We had traveled, and he knew how valuable a nice clean modern motel could be. They were all auto camps [in Oakland] then, just wooden little plain old things." She thought he probably chose the site because his business was nearby; "he had in mind to build someday, and with the [1939] fair coming, thought that would be a good time. A lot of people came for the fair, and that started it off." Fairgoers would drive to a motel on the outskirts of town, and take public transit across town and over the bridge to Treasure Island. More generally, she explained that motels were located on the edges of town "so people were ready to go the next morning." Besides traffic considerations, "if they wanted to stay in town, they had to go to a hotel," and at a hotel "you had to dress up, where you could just come in shorts to a motel - lots of people were dressed nicely too, but you didn't have to." She described the clientele as "just regular travelers," traveling salesmen, people who came to California for the winter, and, during World War II, families of military personnel stationed nearby (the motel "did real well during the war years"). The management learned to recognize local license plates and turned such customers away, saying they had just filled the last room.

Johnson recalled, "We kept one unit, number 31, for when we were there, to relieve the manager. The owner's unit was just regular; the manager's had two bedrooms, a bath, kitchen, dinette, and living room." She remembered the manager's family as friends and neighbors from the butcher shop, a husband, wife, and daughter named Fanzago ("they were not too well off, he was an artist, so my father asked if they wanted to be manager"); there were also two employees who changed sheets and did other chores. Linen was washed by a laundry in Elmhurst, about a mile away on East 14th Street, East Oakland's main commercial strip. Elmhurst was also where the Mission Motel referred its guests for restaurants, particularly the Cottage Dining Room. Johnson remembered about a third of the units having kitchens (though plans show a kitchen in each unit): "my mother didn't especially care for kitchens because she was afraid they would leave a mess." Furnishings carried out the California mission theme: colorful pottery dishes in the kitchens, Monterey furniture with leather thongs, "a string-type material" for the drapes and bedspreads. The court was landscaped with a fishpond and bridge, and the palm trees and other plants were "pretty good sized" by the time the Wrights left. The area in front of the owners' unit, where the duplex-office was later built, was a garden where guests could sit. Johnson considered it "an unusually nice motel, even for people that came from the east and midwest"; at that time "the only other really presentable motel" was one across the street to the west, "very contemporary" - probably the Park Lane at 8100 MacArthur Boulevard (no longer extant).

After the war the Wrights decided to move to Los Gatos, and sold the motel to Lorenzo Martinelli. Bernetta Johnson recognized the name, but knew nothing more about him. One 1945 building permit lists the owner as "Mission Motel Company, Sharon Building, San Francisco," and other permits through c.1975 were issued to Lorenzo Martinelli at the Sharon Building and then at the Mission Motel address. Telephone books and reverse directories through the mid-1970s appear to indicate that he lived there, which is corroborated by an oral history informant who stated that when she lived there during the Korean War the owner, on the premises, "was Italian." (See III. C., Cooper interview.)

Advertisements in directories by 1946 show the Mission Motel - as well as the nearby Elmhurst Court - advertising "apartment suites." In telephone books of the late 1940s the Mission Motel advertised "60 Modern Stucco Units - Hotel and Apartment Accommodations"; in the 1950s, "90 Complete Modern Units." It was Oakland's largest, and the first to run an illustrated display ad ("Look for the Tower" - April 1952 yellow pages). As tourist business declined after completion of the Nimitz Freeway through Oakland in 1958 and the MacArthur Freeway in 1962, the Mission Motel continued to grow and was increasingly

marketed as apartments. Major apartment alterations took place in 1959 and 1966 (see Section 6, Alterations and Additions). In 1959 the listing was "Mission Motel and Apartments," and it advertised 97 units, with daily, weekly, and monthly rates. Reverse directories from 1964 to 1984 show a substantial number of names with listed telephone numbers - a minimum measure of semi-permanent residents: 14 in 1964, 25 in 1974, 25 in 1978, 22 in 1984, some continuing for ten years or more. These directories also identify the storefront occupants: Sherry's Beauty Salon, Tender Touch Beauty Salon, Aware Advertising Agency, Paul Mathus Tax Service, Dottie's Dressmaking, Las Vegas Plaques.

Permits in the late 1970s identify the owner as John (?) Adams. Reverse directories from 1978 on show the owner/manager unit occupied by Kusum Patel, and by 1990 or earlier the owners were Kusum and Indu Patel, by then residing in Fremont, California. The Patels reflect the widespread ownership of California motels and hotels by Indians, most often Gujuratis named Patel (see III. D., Slater article). In 1994 the property was acquired by Oakland Community Housing Inc. as a site for a new townhouse project.

**4. Original Plans and Construction:** Plans for the first unit ("Proposed Motel or Auto Court for Mr. & Mrs. W. Wright," permit A72250, 4/26/38, \$27,000) show 31 attached units constructed of reinforced hollow tile on reinforced concrete foundations, arranged along the edges of a diagonal L-shaped lot, forming an irregular keyhole-shaped inner courtyard. The units alternated with open-fronted garages, all joined under a continuous red-tiled shed roof, highest at the back of the units, sloping down to form a "continuous porch" all around the courtyard. Because of the angle of the lot, there were several odd-shaped trapezoidal corner units. The two units closest to Foothill Boulevard (later MacArthur Boulevard), at either end of the chain, had picturesque east end elevations with planter boxes labeled "cacti bed," "hand tooled" porch posts, and large stepped chimneys of whitewashed brick, decorated with vases, niches, and tile insets. The south end, on Unit 1, the manager's office and residence, had a mission bell in a wall niche, and Unit 31 on the north had an open air fireplace and "tile vents" like canales in the upper wall. According to the plans, each of the 31 units had a living room in front, and a small bathroom and kitchen behind. According to Bernetta Johnson the tile was handmade by a manufacturer in Niles in southern Alameda County: "my father wanted to mix the darker and the light, he didn't want it all orange, he wanted the burnt ends on some of them."

A similar, somewhat smaller, U-shaped court of 25 units was constructed north of the original in 1945 (permit B 7904, 10/05/45, \$46,000; plans exist), with a two-story section at the base of the U and a little free-standing two-unit building at the MacArthur Boulevard end. Design and construction were similar to the 1938 original except that walls were concrete block instead of clay tile. The builder was identified as Sisto Rasori or Rosari, and the engineer as J.R. Guptill of 5936 MacArthur Boulevard. Eleven weeks later (12/27/45) permit B9002 was issued to Rasori and owner Lorenzo Martinelli for a \$17,000 woodframe "duplex" residence at the center street front of the property, a one story and basement building with office and owner/manager unit(s) on the main floor and a laundry in the basement. Specifications for the residence are included in the specifications for the north court - permit B 7904 - but plans do not appear to survive: the City of Oakland apparently disposed of them, as was its usual practice for plans of woodframe houses.

In 1951 expansions were made to the north (permits B34255-6) and south (permits B34246-7), apparently as business expanded and additional land was acquired. Each was in the form of a pair of flat-roofed buildings with a central driveway and basement garages, plus a storefront on the end of the wing closest to the property line. The south addition included a bell tower. In contrast to the earlier units, these buildings were generic frame and stucco midcentury stripped Moderne apartment and carport buildings, with "mission" detailing limited to the new south bell tower and tile roofs on the storefronts at the street.

**6. Alterations and additions:** A glass-enclosed office addition to the manager's apartment was made in 1955 (permit B56247, 7/26/55; \$6000), owner Lorenzo Martinelli, builder not named.

In 1959 a major remodeling converted 25 garages to bedrooms and 5 bedrooms to kitchens (permit B84933, 11/24/59, \$25,000). Basement storage at the front of the 1951 buildings was converted to units.

Additional carports in the north court were made into bedrooms in 1966 creating "14 housekeeping units, 12 1-bedroom units," and a storefront was added to the front of the north wing of the 1945 court, enclosing the base of the north bell tower (permit C29075, 1/24/66, \$21,000, designer W.H. Wisheropp).

The bottom part of the vertical metal and neon sign was replaced with the present "Apartments-Kitchenettes" sign in 1973, reflecting the establishment's evolution over the previous decades. (The original permit for the sign has not been located.)

## **B. Historical Context**

The Mission Motel may have been the earliest example in Oakland, and was certainly Oakland's largest, architecturally most notable, and last and best surviving example, of the regional theme tourist court. It was an outstanding example of the genre of the "motel" - motor hotel - promoted by Arthur Heineman's Mo-tel Inn in San Luis Obispo (1936, also using mission styling). The motel represented an advance from the "auto camps" of the 1920s - campgrounds with toilets and showers, where tourists provided their own tents or used the various "patent auto beds" advertised at the time - and "auto courts" of the 1930s, generally clusters of fairly rustic detached cabins.

Originally an open-road genre, auto camps, courts, and motels seem to have come fairly late to Oakland, which was still building downtown hotels in the late 1920s. The terms appear as classified headings in Oakland city directories about 1923 (auto camp) and telephone books about 1937 (auto court), later motor court (1947) and motel (1957). At first they clustered at the edges of town - many in the 9000 and 8000 blocks of Foothill (MacArthur) Boulevard and across the south border in San Leandro, and others north of Oakland, especially in El Cerrito. North Oakland had an East Bay Auto Camp at 48th Street and San Pablo Avenue in the early 1920s, as well as at least two traditional hotels built in 1929-30 that catered to motorists with on-site parking and service garages: the California at 36th and San Pablo and the Roosevelt at 29th and San Pablo.

The Architectural Record of December 1933 (p. 457) reported on the development of "Roadside Cabins for Tourists" nationally: "Our vast network of highways has become bordered with cabins located at the outskirts of cities and towns or at locations with special scenic advantages. It has been estimated that more than 400,000 'shacks' for autoists have been erected in these locations during the past four years.... The construction of 'shacks' has been the single growing and highly active division of the building industry during the depression years. So attractive have these cabins become to the autoist that hotels have tried to adjust their city accommodations... 'Free Garage. Come as you are.' ... The cross-country traveler also finds it desirable to 'skirt' a town, avoiding heavier traffic, and to stop in a wooded grove near a highway.... Some of these minimal cabins are now being occupied year round by families who cannot afford to live in towns."

An Oakland Auto Court at 8603 Hillside Street is first listed in the January 1937 telephone book, as Oakland Auto Camp. It advertised "30 attractive, homelike cottages," some with kitchenettes; the design and layout, as shown on an early postcard, were not unlike the Mission Motel, with tile roofs, arched porches, and garages linking the units. The August 1938 Automobile Court

listings show a Motel Roosevelt at 9029 Foothill (just north of the Mission Motel). The Mission Motel is first listed in May 1939; four of the eight listings in that book have "motel" in their name. The number of Automobile Court listings increased steadily through the 1940s: in addition to the visiting military families mentioned by Johnson, the Mission and other motels probably served as semi-permanent housing for some of the many war workers who came to the East Bay. Most of Oakland's early auto courts, cabins of light wood construction, were repeatedly updated and replaced over the years, as shown by Sanborn maps for the Hillside, the Roosevelt (later known as St. Joseph and Cactus), and others. The Mission, due to its unusually solid construction, was almost certainly the oldest Oakland auto court to survive into the mid-1990s.

In the context of Chester Liebs's findings on motels nationwide (From Main Street to Miracle Mile: America's Roadside Architecture, 1985, pp. 169-192) the Mission Motel is typical of urban auto courts with its "land efficient, in-line rows perpendicular to the road," and an elaborate and prominently sited building containing the office and owner's quarters. In the years before national motel chains, motels exhibited a fanciful variety of architectural styles, often vernacular interpretations of the attractions of the region. Like gas stations and roadside restaurants of the period, their business depended on catching the motorist's eye, and one means was regional appeal: New England cottages in the northeast, columned porches in the south, teepees in the plains states, and romanticized Spanish mission in California and the southwest. The Mo-tel Inn promoted the fashion in northern California with its bell tower, tile roof, and stucco exterior alluding to the nearby mission. This theme was adopted soon after, along with the term "motel," by the builders of the Mission Motel. Other similar examples included the El Dorado Mo-Tel in Stockton (pre-1941; brochure in Oakland Public Library collection) and the Rancheria Motel near Santa Barbara (Architectural Record, July 1940). Liebs considers the string of connected units instead of detached cabins a forward-looking feature, more common after World War II; it was, of course, a good match for the mission styling.

The mission imagery itself was not particularly new in 1938: Warren James Belasco's Americans on the Road (1979) shows mission-style motels in Texas from the "mid 1930s," and Liebs notes a Mission Village Auto Court near Los Angeles in 1929 and finds that by the late 1930s Moderne was superseding regional imagery in motel design - witness the knotty pine interiors of the Mission Motel. In the 1940s the Architectural Record devoted various articles to motels, "now entering [the architect's] purview," in contrast to their "embryo form - series ranks of tiny imitation 'homes,' some good, many 'picturesque,' and others beyond description," and "period of garish imitation and amateurish staginess" (October 1941, p. 63; May 1948, p. 95).

The Mission Motel differed from most of its kind (the early "'shacks' for autoists" and even its streamlined successors) in its solid, permanent, concrete and masonry construction. Comparative safety from fire is one of the advantages Liebs notes for the detached wooden cottages; the concrete and tile Mission Motel offered even more protection, and "fireproof" was emphasized in its advertising. Its initial construction cost of \$28,000 for 31 units (exclusive of furnishings and fixtures) places it high among the improved auto courts of the time, according to the industry publication Tourist Court Journal as cited by Belasco (p. 169): "A 1939 article estimated that the average investment in a new 20-unit court was \$1,000 a unit against \$100 a unit in 1925 and \$450 for a deluxe cabin in 1929." The carefully coordinated Mission styling and Monterey furniture, and the tiled baths, fit Belasco's observation (p.164) on motels operating "as a promotional arm of the construction and home decorating industries," introducing travelers to fashions and amenities ahead of those they knew at home. Belasco also notes the same "'no locals' policy" described by Bernetta Johnson, as a way to counter the "no-tell motel" image popularized in a 1940 article "Camps of Crime" by J. Edgar Hoover.

Oakland publicists actively promoted tourism in the 1920s and 30s, and tourists increasingly arrived by automobile. The 1927 Oakland traffic study by Harland Bartholomew and Associates had urgently recommended opening the crosstown route that became MacArthur Boulevard, noting the 15-fold increase in auto registration in the state and county from 1913 to 1926, and citing the difficulty of driving across Oakland as "proof of the theory that traffic increases as the square of the population." The largest number of motels developed along this southeastern approach to town - sections of Foothill Boulevard, Hopkins Street, Moss Avenue, and other neighborhood thoroughfares that were linked in the 1930s into US Highway 50, the central cross-country route, and were collectively renamed MacArthur Boulevard during World War II. The 1936 California State Automobile Association accommodations directory shows Oakland as the first stop along the "Valley Route, San Francisco to San Diego, US 50 to US 99." Oakland also lay along the tourist route promoted by the California Mission Trails Association, whose 1932 brochure featured a bell tower much like those later built at the Mission Motel.

Highway 50 traversed the city over 10 miles, eventually linking up with the approach to the Bay Bridge, Treasure Island, and San Francisco. Most of Oakland's 1940s and 50s motels still line this boulevard. In the postwar years, as shown by the addition dates, the Mission Motel shared in the nationwide boom in auto travel. The completion in 1958 of the MacArthur Freeway (Interstate 580) doomed many of Oakland's smaller and outlying motels, since travelers no longer used surface streets to get in and out of the city. Large new "motor inns," operated by chains and strategically located near Jack London Square and the airport, attracted more and more travelers. The Mission Motel apartment conversions in 1959 and 1966 reflect the effect of the freeway and changing travel patterns. Its decline was also typical of national patterns: one common option everywhere "When the Highway Leaves You" was use as "low-cost housing for transients." Community reaction to this state of affairs in the early 1990s contributed to the Mission Motel's demolition for a new townhouse project.



## Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### **A. General Statement**

**1. Architectural character:** The Mission Motel, built in 1938 with additions in 1945 and 1951, was an outstanding example of a California regional theme motel of the interwar and early postwar years. It was the largest, most elaborate, and most substantially constructed of the many early motels and auto courts that lined the main highway through Oakland before the construction of the MacArthur Freeway in the mid-1950s. It was one of the first Oakland establishments to use the name "motel," and adopted the California stage-set architecture of its namesake the Mo-tel Inn and other southwest-theme tourist courts. Its original 1938 unit was a rambling chain of 31 connected, tile-roofed, white-stuccoed rooms and carports with a continuous mission-like porch, around a roughly L-shaped parking area. Spanish California detailing included decorative porch posts, chimneys, and exterior fireplaces. Additions to the complex, in 1945 and after, followed the design and construction standards set by the 1938 unit.

**2. Condition of fabric:** When examined in late October 1995, the Mission Motel appeared to be in very good structural condition, but neglected and vandalized. A few units in the 1938 court had suffered fire damage, one completely gutted and without its roof. (Damage was effectively confined to the individual units by the tile walls.) One porch post was missing, causing the tile roof to sag at that point. Buildings and grounds were neglected, vegetation overgrown and growing into some of the units, and units were filled with detritus from squatters and scavengers. Most of the piping, wiring, and other material of any value had been scavenged by the time the property was examined, with resulting damage to walls and ceilings, especially in Building 7, the front office/residence building. At the time of examination the property was closed off with chain link fence and all buildings were boarded up. (Representative units in all buildings were opened for examination.) The entire complex was demolished in January 1996.

### **B. Site**

**1. General setting and orientation:** The Mission Motel occupied a large parallelogram-shaped parcel of about 2.7 acres, approximately 450' frontage north-south along MacArthur Boulevard by 250' deep northeast to southwest. The site is in the middle of a long block of MacArthur Boulevard between 90th and 94th Avenues. The parcel slopes about 16' down toward the rear and north. The highest point, at the south street front, is near the top of a rise in MacArthur Boulevard, with a view down the street some distance north into Oakland. This is where the motel's main bell tower was located (Photos CA-2651-1 and 2). Surroundings are mixed residential and commercial: mostly small mid-20th century apartment buildings and houses directly across the street, and nearby businesses including a plant nursery, food and liquor stores, and several other (more recent, smaller, and less distinguished) motels.

**2. Historic landscape design:** The Mission Motel was designed as an auto court, and each of its four phases centered on a paved driveway and parking area. The 1938 plans show small "cacti beds" and "cacti gardens" in front of the decorated street-facing end walls of units 1 and 31. The concrete edging of these beds, and of others in front of the units lining the driveway, was still extant in 1995, though vegetation had reverted to weeds and weedy shrubs. There were about a dozen tall, mature palm trees on the site in 1995, on either side of the driveway near the office building and the front units of the 1938 court. The 1945 and 1951 units had no apparent landscaping. The 1945 residence had a scalloped stucco wall in front along MacArthur Boulevard, that originally enclosed a front yard; the yard and the front of the building had become completely overgrown. Blacktop pavement in the courts was striped into parking spaces.

A late-1940s birdseye sketch postcard of the Mission Motel shows (real or imaginary) lawns around the office/residence, small palm trees in the 1995 locations as well as along the back sides of the motel units, flower beds in front of each unit, a planted circle with a little pond in the middle of the 1938 court (as described by Bernetta Johnson), and a swimming pool and tennis court on the site of the 1951 south wing. It also shows a double-arched gate with tile roof and belfry over the driveway entry. So far, plans, permits, or photographs have not come to light to substantiate the existence of the swimming pool and gate, though the drawing seems extremely exact. It shows all four of the tile-roofed archways (photos B-11, B-12) - part building and part landscape - that linked the different phases of the complex.

The late-1940s view does not yet show the tall vertical metal and neon sign that has been the Mission Motel trademark in recent decades, and no permit has come to light to date it. It first appears as a logo in the Mission Motel's 1958 yellow pages ad. The sign, transferred in November 1995 to the Oakland Museum, was located on a metal pole at the north side of the driveway entrance, adjoining the office. It is 24' tall, red enameled with white letters ("Mission Motel") and edging, with a vertical stem 32" wide and a belfry-shaped top 7' wide, cut out to frame an animated neon bell. Letters and edging are traced in white neon tubing, and the animated bell has three overlapping bell shapes in yellow neon. At one time there was a clock at the bottom of the vertical section. Labels on the bottom of the sign read "General Sign" and Underwriters Laboratories inspection No. A 737463, but there is no date visible. A rectangular lower crosspiece reading "Color TV - Phones - Apartments - Kitchenettes," of backlit plastic with a pair of coach lanterns on top and bare bulb edging (not acquired by the museum) replaced an earlier "Apts - Kitchenettes" bottom piece in 1973.

3. Outbuildings: N/A.

### C. Building Descriptions

The four major phases of the Mission Motel - 1938 south court, 1945 north court, 1945 office/residence, and 1951 south and north additions, are each described below. Building names and numbers in the headings correspond to those on the map provided by Oakland Community Housing, Inc., and to those used in the captions of the 29 black and white photographs.

**PHASE 1: SOUTH COURT AND MAIN BUILDING, 1938 (BUILDING #3; PHOTOS B-1 to B-12)**

**Description of Exterior**

**1. Overall dimensions:** The oldest unit of the Mission Motel was an irregular seven-sided chain of what were originally alternating motel units and carports, surrounding an irregular keyhole-shaped driveway and court (photos B-1, B-3 to 8). The building shape followed the edges of what was originally a slanted L-shaped lot, narrow at the street and wide in back. The overall building footprint was about 254' wide across the back, and about 228' at its deepest. The units were one story, a continuous rambling structure under one long, low shed roof that was about 13' above floor level in back and about 7 1/2' above ground at the front of the porch overhang. From the back wall to the front wall the units were mostly 20' deep, plus 4' under the porch roof. Where the building turned the six oblique or acute corners around the court, there were irregular shaped units. Halfway down the four inner sides of the court, there were passages between units to the 10' side and rear yards. Along the driveway, units on both sides stepped downward in steps of about 4' following the slope of the lot (photo B-7; B-9, showing three steps on south side; B-10, detail of concrete wall, steps, and railing on south side; B-1, far right, and B-2, semi-sunken unit on north side).

**2. Foundations:** Foundations were reinforced concrete, varying in height with the slope of the site. At the rear and sides of the buildings, units had basement vents and crawl spaces of as much as 4', while most were at grade in front in the courtyard.

**3. Walls:** Exterior walls were slightly lumpy textured stucco imitating adobe, over hollow tile and concrete. Rear walls were capped with flat, rectangular, red tiles. The two end walls facing the street were decorated with large whitewashed brick chimneys that covered much of the wall, and these walls were further detailed with inset niches, and canales that were attic vents.

**4. Structural system, framing:** According to plans, front and rear walls were 8"-thick hollow clay tile, walls between units and between carports (running front to rear) were 6" tile, and walls between rooms in the units were 4" tile. Walls were stuccoed outside and plastered inside, but tile was visible in the fire-damaged units. Plans state "All tile walls to be reinforced with 1/4" steel rods every 18" horizontally. Window and door sides and lintels above, to be of tile, poured solid with concrete, and reinforced with steel rods." The top of the rear wall is shown as an 8" x 8" "concrete ribbon around entire building," containing 5/8" continuous rod. In front a "6x10 reinforced concrete beam over garage fronts" is shown. The single-slope roof had 2x6 rafters 24" on center, extending beyond the front wall to rest on a 6x6 beam over the 6x6 porch posts. Ceiling joists were 2x4s 16" on center, shown as resting on a "2x4 plate secured to tile by toggle bolts" at the top of the front wall, and there was a trusswork of 1x6s in the attic area. The mission tile roof was laid over wood sheathing over the interior of the building, while the porches had exposed framing and slats under the roof tile. The 8" tile of the front and rear walls was revealed at demolition to be N. Clark & Son's "Heathcube," 8" cubes with grooved sides and inner crosspieces forming a grid of 9 inner cells. Interior plaster and exterior stucco were applied directly to the tile.

**5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads:** There was a continuous porch 4' deep extending in front of all the units. Porch posts were plain 6x6s spaced about 12' apart (somewhat irregularly, depending on the spacing of the units and carports). They supported 6x6 beams, which rested on caps of 6x6s about 24" long with chamfered ends. Posts, beams, and caps were painted dark brown. Paving of the porch is described on plans as "brick or tile"; in 1995 it was red concrete scored in large squares, in most places about 2" above the asphalt pavement of the courtyard. On either side of the driveway, where the building turned corners and stepped up the hill, some of the porches were set apart by concrete half-walls, iron railings, and changes of level, and

enclosed by concrete planter boxes.

Two tile-roofed stucco arches linked the building to its 1945 neighbor to the north, and were probably constructed in 1945 (B-11, B-2). A heavy brick arch, attached to the decorated south end wall, led to a partial rear porch and rear yard of the south wing, and to the path to the 1951 south addition (B-12).

**6. Chimneys:** Each unit had a whitewashed brick corbeled chimney, emerging below the peak of the roof. Chimneys were square in section, the narrow lower part about 8 courses high, then two courses projecting an inch or two, a third projecting farther, a fourth receding, and a narrow tile chimney pot and metal flue. At the ends of the building facing east toward the street, there were large ornamental chimneys occupying about half the wall area. These were of common brick painted white, about 8' wide at the base, with stepped sides (meant to hold vases, according to the plans) and multiple tile flues at the top. Each had a round-topped niche with projecting brick sill and radiating brick top. The chimney on the north wall (unit 31) had a large open-air fireplace, edged with flagstone. The south chimney's fireplace was indoors in unit 1, the original office/manager's unit. (B-12, far right; B-2, far left)

**7. Openings:** Each motel unit originally had a front door, a single large front window, a full-height carport opening, and small back windows to the bathroom and kitchen. All the front openings terminated about 8" below the roofline. Because the building was boarded up at the time of examination, actual materials of only a few doors and windows were seen.

a. Doorways and doors: Front doors were described on plans as "solid slab door," 6'8" high. Their insides were faced with knotty pine. They were recessed slightly into the exterior stuccoed walls, with no frames or trim. Some had low red concrete thresholds. The carports had been enclosed to create additional rooms. Their openings were filled in with stuccoed walls for about half their height, with wide horizontal windows inserted in the upper half.

b. Windows: The front window on each unit was 4' wide by 5' high, deeply recessed into the wall, with a sloping stuccoed sill and no other trim. Rear kitchen windows were typically 3' x 4', bathroom windows 2' x 3'. Windows were all shown on plans as steel sash, the front ones paired casement with three nearly square panes on each side. Some, at least, had been replaced by wood casement or metal sliders over the years.

**8. Roof:**

a. Shape, covering: The roof of the south court building(s) was a nearly continuous shed roof, highest at the back walls of the units and lowest in front over the porches, with a slope of about 1 in 3. It was interrupted along the driveway, where the building stepped up or down the hill, and where the building wrapped around the courtyard creating hips and valleys in the roof. The roof was covered with half-round red clay tile, laid two deep to produce a rough, rustic texture. The tiles were a mixture of smooth (possibly replacements?) and an unusual scraped or scored, spiny texture attractive to moss, dirt, and other colorants.

b. Cornice, eaves: The top of the back walls, at the highest point of the roof, was capped with square, flat clay tiles. The bottom edge, the porch overhang, displayed the open ends of the tiles, resting on exposed rafters and open slats, so that the tiles were visible from under the porch roof (B-9). Where the building stepped up the hill, the roof tiles wrapped around the top edge of the exposed side wall (B-10).

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: N/A.

**Description of Interior**

**1. Floor plans:** There were 31 units wrapping around the keyhole-shaped south court, joined side by side, roughly alternating living units and carports.

Most units were rectangular in plan, except for trapezoidal units at the five oblique and acute corners and the front ends. Except for the office (unit 1) at the east end, and two larger one-bedroom units at the acute-angled north and south corners (units 13 and 28), plans indicate that each originally had a single living room about 12' x 14' in front, and a kitchen 8' x 7' and bathroom 6' x 7' across the back. The 8.5' x 20' carports were later converted into bedrooms, with a door cut through from the living room. There was a small closet off each living room, back to back with the bathroom. In the bathroom, the toilet was in an alcove between the back of the closet and the shower stall, and the sink was in the back corner not occupied by the shower.

**2. Stairways:** N/A

**3. Flooring:** Plans describe floors as tile. In the units seen in 1995, living room and bedroom floors were covered with shag carpet; kitchens had vinyl tile; and bathrooms had probably original 4" ceramic tile floors.

**4. Wall and ceiling finish:** Interior walls were white plaster over clay tile. Bathrooms had shower stalls and high wainscoting of colored 4" ceramic tile with narrow contrasting bands, different colors in different units, apparently mostly pastels (pink, lavender). Kitchens had similar tile around the sinks and on narrow side counters, in traditional kitchen colors (blue, cream, yellow). Ceilings in the kitchens and original living rooms and bedrooms were knotty pine; in the bathrooms and the converted carports the ceilings were white plaster.

**5. Openings:**

a. Doorways and doors: Doorways between rooms were plain rectangular openings with no trim other than some narrow wood surrounds. Interior doors were plain light-colored plywood with plain round knobs, some stainless steel and some brass-colored. The inner sides of the front doors were knotty pine grooved as five vertical planks.

b. Windows: Each room had its own fairly large window: 4' x 5' in the living rooms, 3' x 4' in kitchens, 2' x 3' in the bathrooms, and about 5' x 2.5' in the converted carports. All were plain rectangular openings with no trim other than some narrow wood surrounds. Windows were all shown on plans as steel sash, the front ones paired casement with three nearly square panes on each side. Some, at least, had been replaced by wood casement or metal sliders.

6. Decorative features and trim: Decorative features inside the units were the colored tile in the bathrooms and kitchens, knotty pine doors and ceilings, and scalloped moldings over the tops of the kitchen cabinets.

7. Hardware: Interior and exterior doors had plain round knobs, some stainless steel and some brass-colored; some had center button locks. Kitchen cabinet handles were plain nickel-plated concave round knobs.

**8. Mechanical equipment:**

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Each living room had a tall, narrow gas wall heater on the wall between the kitchen and bathroom doors, apparently sharing the chimney with the kitchen stove.

b. Lighting: Each room had a ceiling fixture, operated by a wall switch near the door.

c. Plumbing: Each kitchen had a rectangular sink with tile backsplash and drainboard. Plans show individual water heaters in the kitchens, not present in the units inspected in 1995. (Bernetta Johnson remembered individual water heaters being in the basements.) Bathrooms had a small corner sink (usually back to back with the kitchen sink), shower, and toilet.

9. Original furnishings: Bathroom and kitchen fixtures were the only furnishings to survive. (See Bernetta Johnson's description in Section A3.)

**PHASE 2: NORTH COURT, NORTH COURT BUILDING, 1945 (BUILDING #4; PHOTOS C-1 to C-6)**

**Description of Exterior**

1. **Overall dimensions:** The second unit of the Mission Motel was an irregular U-shaped court of what were originally alternating motel units and carports, flanking a long, straight, narrow driveway and court (C-1, C-5). The overall building footprint was about 80' across, and about 230' deep from the angled back wall to the street (including a 25' storefront addition at the front of the north arm of the U). The south arm of the U was only about 170' long, its eastward length matching that of the north wing of the 1938 court, which it adjoined. The old and new structures were parallel, their back walls separated by an alleyway about 9' wide, and linked by a narrow arched stucco gateway. At the front end was a small detached two-unit cottage built as a sort of pendant along with the 1945 court, behind the east end of the south arm of the U, in an angle formed by the north arm of the 1938 court. From the back wall to the front wall the units were mostly 20' deep, plus 4' under the porch roof - the same dimensions as in the 1938 court. Units and carports were all approximately 16' wide. There were originally 27 units total in the 1945 court and cottage.

The arms of the U were one story, each side continuous under a long, low gabled tile roof with front overhang. At two points on each side the building stepped downhill a foot or so, with a resulting step in the roof (C-2, C-6). At the base of the court the building was two stories high, the two-story portion being a very shallow U, angled to follow the shape of the lot (C-5). This part had a tiled hip roof, and a second-floor balcony under the roof overhang. The ground floor was originally carports, later converted to units. The units in this section were parallelograms or more irregularly shaped.

2. **Foundations:** Foundations were reinforced concrete, varying in height with the slope of the site. At the rear and sides of the buildings, units had basement vents and crawl spaces of as much as 4'; most were at or just above grade in front in the courtyard. Plans show a full basement 8' deep at the rear of the westernmost two-story section.

3. **Walls:** Exterior walls were lumpy adobe-textured stucco, over concrete block and concrete. Specifications directed that the stucco be 1/2" thick, "trowelled to similar texture as the present units," and colored to match existing units. The two end walls facing the street were both originally decorated, the low gable-roofed south one with a tiled arch set into the wall (facing the office/residence building across the driveway: C-6), and the north one with a hip roof and a stepped, chimney-like base to the tile-roofed north bell tower. The tower base was decorated with an arch filled with "block glass." The storefront addition later filled in the space from this end to the street, swallowing up the base of the bell tower so that the tower rose out of the roof (C-3, C-4).

4. **Structural system, framing:** According to plans and specifications, all exterior walls of the north court buildings were of 8" x 8" x 16" basalite concrete blocks, assembled into "stud reinforced walls" according to a specification sheet from the Basalite Rock Co. of Napa, California, dated November 14, 1939, incorporated with the plans. Specially shaped basalite units created continuous horizontal and vertical channels to receive reinforcing bars, around which concrete studs, beams, and lintels were cast in place. Partitions were shown as 4" and 6" basalite. The second floor balcony was concrete, cantilevered on cast concrete supports. Plans show the floor

below it (originally the carport floor) also of concrete construction (concrete joists, 12" forms, 3" slab). Other floors were shown as having 2x12 wood joists. The roof was mission tile laid over wood sheathing, with the rafters exposed on the undersides of the porch roofs.

**5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads:** There was a continuous porch 4' deep in front of all the one-story units, and a similar porch over the second floor balcony. Porch posts on the one-story wings were 6x6s spaced about 16' apart, at the divisions between the units; on the second-story balcony they were somewhat closer together, and there were none below the balcony. They supported 6x6 beams, which rested on caps of 6x6s. Posts, beams, and caps were painted dark brown, and were more elaborate than in the 1938 court. Posts had chamfered corners, beams had faceted ends, and caps had scrolled profiles (C-6). There were decorative X-shaped metal straps applied to the beams above the posts, and diagonal bracing used decoratively on the underside of the roofs at corners. The two-unit cottage had a single recessed vestibule at its center front, three steps up from grade, containing the front doors of both units; its lintel was a beam resting on corbels that matched the scrolled caps on the posts elsewhere in the court. Porches were paved with red concrete. The balcony and the cottage porch had wrought iron railings with 1/2" square uprights, twisted for part of their length, and molded handrails.

**6. Chimneys:** Each one-story unit (including the two in the cottage) had a white stucco chimney, emerging about 2' behind and below the peak of the roof. Chimneys were square in section, with corbeling like flat square slabs, receding to a mock chimney pot on top. The actual vents were metal, set into the back sides of the chimneys. The two-story section had five chimneys - four on the roof and one up the south side wall - all of which had red tile peaked rooflets.

**7. Openings:** Each motel unit originally had a front door and a single large front window, and small back windows to the bathroom and kitchen. Adjoining some but not all units was a full-height carport opening, closed off and given a high, wide window when the carports were converted into bedrooms. All openings terminated about 8" below the roofline. Because the building was boarded up at the time of examination, actual materials of only a few doors and windows were seen.

a. **Doorways and doors:** Front doors to units were shown on plans and specifications as flush slab doors, 6'8" high and 2'8" wide, scored as vertical planks. They were recessed slightly into the exterior stuccoed walls, with no frames or trim. The carports were later enclosed to create additional rooms. Their openings were filled in with stuccoed walls for about half their height, and wide horizontal windows placed in the upper half.

b. **Windows:** The front window on each unit was about 5' square, paired casement, deeply recessed into the wall, with a sloping stuccoed sill and no other trim. Rear kitchen windows were typically 3' x 4', bathroom windows 2' x 3'. Window sash was described in specifications as sugar pine. Some, at least, had been replaced by metal sliders or other substitutes over the years. A few windows, especially on the backs of the buildings, retained Spanish-style wrought iron security grilles, not original; others showed traces where grilles were formerly attached. Each unit of the two-unit cottage had a very large front window, about 8' wide, paired casement flanked by fixed sash, with large wrought iron grilles.

**8. Roof:**

a. **Shape, covering:** The cottage and the one-story north court wings had very low gabled roofs, almost continuous on each wing. The north wing terminated with a hip (hidden by the storefront addition), the south with a gable-ended wall. The two-story section had a hip roof that wrapped around the shallow U-plan; it had the same low pitch as the wings. The roofs were covered with half-round red clay tile, laid to produce a rough, rustic texture. The tiles were a mixture of smooth (probably replacements) and an irregular

longitudinally grooved texture as if scored by fingers. Specifications describe it as Gladding McBean Barcelona Mission tile of varying shades, 85% russet colors and 15% reds, and explain how tiles were to be laid to produce an irregular effect by varying spacing and inserting double or triple tiles. Tiles were to be attached with copper nails and copper wire.

b. Cornice, eaves: The bottom front edge of the roofs, the porch overhang, displayed the open ends of the tiles, resting on exposed rafters and open slats, so that the tiles were visible from under the porch roof; as described in the specifications, they were "laid with short pieces of tile to show a doubled end." Roof peaks were capped with tile laid in cement. At the gable ends on the end walls and where the building stepped up the hill, the roof tiles wrapped around the top edge of the exposed side wall.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: The north bell tower, originally rising out of a stepped, chimney-like base on the end wall of the north wing, later rose out of the roof of a storefront addition. It rose about one story above the roof, with a flared base, an arched tile roof, and arched belfry cutouts on all four sides. There was formerly a bell suspended from a beam in the belfry (C-3, C-4). This bell and the matching one in the south tower were made of concrete, and were removed by a local architectural firm for possible reuse.

#### **Description of Interior**

1. **Floor plans:** There were originally a total of 27 units in the 1945 court and cottage, the one-story wings roughly alternating living units and double-width carports, joined side by side. Most units were rectangular in plan, except in the two-story end section where they were parallelograms or more irregularly shaped. From the back wall to the front wall the units were mostly 20' deep, plus 4' under the porch roof - the same dimensions as in the 1938 court. Units and carports were all approximately 16' wide. Except for some extra-small units at the corners and two larger units with bathtubs in the cottage, each originally had a single living room about 15' x 13' in front, and a kitchen 8' x 7' and bathroom 6' x 6' across the back. Plans also show a bathtub in the northeast end unit, in an alcove in the base of the north belltower, lit by the glass block wall. The carports were later converted into either one large or two small bedrooms, with doors cut through from the living rooms. There was a small closet off each living room, back to back with the bathroom, and a recess for a radiator, back to back with the kitchen. In the bathroom, the toilet was in an alcove between the back of the closet and the shower stall.

2. **Stairways:** There were two stairways to the second floor balcony and units, a suspended metal stair up the outside south wall, reached from the alleyway between the north and south courts, and an enclosed stair at the base of the north wing where the one- and two-story sections joined. (The enclosed stair was boarded up and not seen.)

3. **Flooring:** Specifications describe living room floors as wood and bathroom floors as tile. In the units seen in 1995, living rooms and bedrooms had shag carpet and bathrooms had probably original 4" ceramic tile floors.

4. **Wall and ceiling finish:** Interior walls were white-painted plaster over concrete block or expanded metal lath. Specifications describe tinted plaster, and some was visible - cream color - where a radiator had been removed. Bathrooms had shower stalls and high wainscot of colored 4" ceramic tile with narrow contrasting bands, different colors in different units: cream and maroon in one that was seen, green and yellow with a black stripe in another. Kitchens had similar tile around the sinks and on narrow side counters. As in the 1938 units, ceilings in the kitchens and original living rooms and bedrooms were knotty pine (called 1" x 12" Ponderosa pine in specifications); in the bathrooms and the converted carports the ceilings were white plaster.



**5. Openings:**

a. **Doorways and doors:** Doorways between rooms were plain rectangular openings with narrow varnished wood surrounds. Doors seen were single panel with plain round knobs.

b. **Windows:** Each room had its own fairly large window: 4' x 5' or 5' x 5' in the living rooms, 3' x 4' in kitchens, 2' x 3' in the bathrooms, and about 5' x 2.5' in the converted carports. All were in plain rectangular openings with narrow quarter round wood surrounds. Windows are described in specifications as sugar pine sash.

**6. Decorative features and trim:** Decorative features inside the units were the colored tile in the bathrooms and kitchens and the knotty pine ceilings.

**7. Hardware:** Interior and exterior doors that were seen had plain round knobs. Very little hardware survived at the time the property was inspected.

**8. Mechanical equipment:**

a. **Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:** Each unit had a radiator set into a recess in the living room wall back to back with the kitchen (gone by the time the property was inspected). The boiler room was in the basement of the two-story section of the north court.

b. **Lighting:** Each room had a ceiling fixture, operated by a wall switch near the door. Only the bases of the fixtures survived by the time the property was inspected.

c. **Plumbing:** Each kitchen had a rectangular sink with tile backsplash and drainboard. Plans show individual water heaters in the kitchens, not present in the units inspected in 1995. Bathrooms had a small sink, shower, and toilet.

**9. Original furnishings:** Plans show a large linen closet at the top of the inside stairs (not accessible). Bathroom and kitchen fixtures were similar to those in the south court.

**PHASE 3: OFFICE/RESIDENCE BUILDING or DUPLEX, 1945 (BUILDING #7; PHOTOS A-1 to A-5, and PHOTO 2**

**Description of Exterior**

**1. Overall dimensions:** This building was a rambling H-plan (or two Ls joined by a crosspiece) roughly 120' long (parallel to MacArthur Boulevard) by 35' deep. Variouslly described as "residence" (specifications), "duplex" (permit application and Sanborn map), and office, it was built in 1945 soon after the north court and two-unit cottage, on a street-front site reserved when those buildings were constructed. It was located across a driveway or back court from the cottage and the east ends of the short wings of the 1945 and 1938 courts. Its front porch faced the street, behind an undulating stucco wall about 3' high. It was one story and basement, on a site that sloped down toward the back.

**2. Foundations:** Foundations and basement were reinforced concrete. Basement floor was approximately at grade in back, about 4' below grade in front.

**3. Walls:** Exterior walls were adobe-textured stucco over 1x6" diagonal wood sheathing and concrete. Specifications (which were combined with those for the 1945 court) direct that the stucco be 1/2" thick and "trowelled to similar texture as the present units," i.e., matching the 1938 court.

**4. Structural system, framing:** The residence building, like most other California Spanish houses of its day, was of wood frame construction above a concrete basement. Construction appeared substantial but generic: 2x6 studs 2x12 floor joists, and 2x6 ceiling joists 16" on center; 2x6 rafters 24" on center. The roof was mission tile laid over wood sheathing, with the rafters exposed on the undersides of the porch roofs.

**5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads:**

a. Front porch: There was a porch about 6' deep and 30' wide across the street front of the building. It extended between the two shallow front wings, and was covered by the overhang of the center gable roof. Porch posts were similar to those on the north court: 6x6s with chamfered corners, and caps with scrolled profiles. There were two steps up from the pink concrete walk, with bright polychrome tiled risers and red tile treads. Added security grilles fully enclosed the front porch. This porch served the main front door of the residence, and was approached from the street (not from the motel complex) through a gate in the stucco wall.

b. Back porch: The back entry was a flight of 13 steps along the back wall of the building, running south to north from near the driveway, entering the building at the south end of kitchen (A-2). As on the front porch, treads were approximately 12" square red clay tiles, 3 1/2 tiles across, and risers were approximately 6" square bright polychrome glazed tiles in floral and geometric designs, seven tiles alike on each riser and no two risers alike. The outer side wall was stuccoed, and there was a wrought iron handrail matching those elsewhere in the complex (1/2" square uprights twisted in the middle, molded handrail). The small square top landing had a little shed roof, with roof tiles, open eaves, chamfered post, faceted beam end, and scrolled post cap, matching the front and north court porches. A security gate had been added at the entrance to the landing.

c. Office extension: A third porch, to the office, originally faced the driveway across a small yard in the L at the southeast corner of the building. In 1955 the L was filled in with a flat roofed, glass walled office extension about 20' square. It had simplified posts between full-height panes of glass, honey-colored plywood interior walls, scalloped wood valances over the service window to the inner office and over what was probably a notice board, beamed ceilings and quarry tile floors. The flat roof was wood and composition, not tiled.

d. Rear deck: A concrete-floored deck over part of the basement, at center rear in the hollow of the H-plan, was later enclosed as a sunroom with a large window.

6. **Chimneys:** There was a tall, prominent white-painted brick chimney at the center of the front wing of the building closest to the driveway (just north of the office addition: photo 2, left of center), with a red tile peaked rooflet and tall rectangular vents around the sides of its top. In back, at the north end of the kitchen, was a plain square stuccoed rooftop chimney with a metal flue.

7. **Openings:** Because the building was boarded up and heavily overgrown at the time of examination, actual materials and character of a number of doors and windows could not be seen. Where this is the case, location and shape are described.

a. **Doorways and doors:** The main front door, opening onto the front porch directly opposite the gate from the street, was rectangular, one of three large doors or French windows onto the porch. The door itself was missing by the time the building was inspected. Specifications state that it was to be "2-1/4 inch thick veneered with quarter oak both sides, paneled and molded," with oak jambs and outside trim. The back door into the kitchen was wood with a glass upper panel. Front and back doors were recessed slightly into the exterior stuccoed walls, with narrow wood trim. Along the back wall were several large plain rectangular basement openings, boarded up at the time of inspection, including doors to the basement garage and laundry.

b. **Windows:** Windows were mostly rectangular, paired wood casement, recessed into the stucco walls, with narrow wood sills and trim. Placement was asymmetrical like the plan of the building. Sizes ranged from 2' x 3' bathroom windows to picture-window size on the north front wing and rear sunroom, according to the uses of the rooms. The southernmost rear window and the front window on the prominent gable-ended wing just north of the front porch were tall triple arches, the middle arch larger than the side ones (A-3, A-1). The entire sash and surrounds of both sets of arched windows, in front and in back, were missing. Window sash is described in specifications as sugar pine, with obscure glass in the basement and bathroom windows and clear glass elsewhere. Some of the original sash and glazing remained in the front basement windows. A few windows retained their Spanish-style wrought iron security grilles.

#### 8. **Roof:**

a. **Shape, covering:** The residence building had a complex hip and gable roof, following the rambling plan of the building. Roof pitch was very low, similar to the north court buildings. The roofs of the north wing were higher than the south part, and had attic vents under the eaves. Roofs were covered with half-round red clay tile, laid to produce a rough, rustic texture. The tiles had an irregular longitudinally grooved texture as if fingers were run along them, and are described in specifications as Gladding McBean Barcelona Mission tile. (See north court for more details on tilework.)

b. **Cornice, eaves:** The narrow eaves and the porch overhangs displayed the open ends of the tiles, resting on exposed rafters and open slats, so that the tiles were visible from below. Roof peaks were capped with tile laid in cement. At the gable ends the roof tiles wrapped around the top edge of the exposed wall.

c. **Dormers, cupolas, towers:** N/A (see Chimneys).

## Description of Interior

**1. Floor plans:** The main floor of the residence building centered on a large and ornate living room, about 14' east to west by 24' north to south, occupying most of the crosspiece of the H-plan (A-4, A-5). The main front door and two sets of French doors opened from this room onto the front porch facing MacArthur Boulevard on the east, and a wide scalloped arch to the south led to a 14' x 12' dining room and the office wing beyond it at the southeast corner. Rectangular French doors opened to the kitchen/former deck on the west, and a narrower scalloped arch and two steps up led to a double-loaded corridor serving four bedrooms and two bathrooms in the north wing of the building.

The office wing had a small original office room with fireplace at the front southeast corner of the building, and two smaller sitting or sleeping rooms and a bathroom in the L to the southwest. In 1955 the L was enclosed by the glass-walled office extension (see 5. Porches, c, above).

The kitchen and the deck/sunroom, later joined (with the sunroom fitted up with cabinets as an extension of the kitchen), occupied the middle rear of the building, parallel to the living room and dining room, and bookended by the office-wing bathroom (south of the kitchen) and north non-master bathroom (north of the sunroom).

The north bedroom wing had a hall running north-south. Heading north from the living room, on the left (rear of the building: exterior photo A-3) were a small bathroom, medium-sized bedroom, large linen closet, and master bedroom with large attached bathroom; and on the right (front: exterior photo A-1), two small connected bedrooms.

The largest basement space, under the north bedroom wing, was entered from the rear (at grade), and extended the full depth of the building, to the street front where it had high windows at ground level. It was occupied by a laundry and a small toilet room. The far north basement space was a garage. There was also a partial basement to the south under the kitchen area, not opened for inspection.

**2. Stairways:** There were two steps up from the northwest corner of the living room to the hallway of the bedroom wing (A-5). The only other up/down circulation observed was a hatch to the attic in the linen closet off the hall, and a laundry chute in one bathroom. No indoor stairway to the basement was seen.

**3. Flooring:** Bedrooms and hall had narrow oak flooring. The living and dining rooms had oak parquet in 12" squares. Bathrooms had tile in colors matching the walls (4" glazed salmon in the master bath, laid diagonally; maroon, gray, and tan 1" and 2" porcelain in the smaller bath). The inner office had black and dark green mottled vinyl tile flooring, and the 1955 outer office enclosure had quarry tile floors. Basement floors were cement.

**4. Wall and ceiling finish:** Interior walls of most rooms were white-painted plaster over expanded metal lath (mesh). Specifications describe tinted plaster, and some was visible - cream color - where radiators and dining room shelves had been removed. The kitchen had later wallpaper above its yellow tile wainscot, and the sunroom walls were painted green. The outer office had honey-colored plywood walls. Bathrooms had high wainscoting of colored 4" ceramic tile with narrow contrasting bands: green in the office wing, salmon in the master bathroom, and maroon in the small north bathroom. Ceilings in all rooms except the outer office were plaster, and most had coved moldings. The living room had a multiple barrel vaulted ceiling with nine big wooden box beams running from back to front of the building, the ceiling arched between each pair (A-4). Beams and their corbels (which closely resembled the scrolled post caps outside) were painted and grained in a light fumed oak color. In the 1955 outer office the ceiling was blue-painted planks on heavy rustic beams. Basement walls and ceilings were unpainted concrete.

**5. Openings:**

a. Doorways and doors: Most doorways between rooms were plain rectangular openings with molded and grooved enameled wood surrounds, with plain flush doors. French doors connected the living room and kitchen. The openings between the dining room and living room and between the living room and hall were tall scalloped arches, the one to the dining room wider than the one to the hall (A-4, A-5); their sides had chamfered plaster corners.

b. Windows: All rooms had large windows, mostly plain rectangular openings with wide molded and grooved wood surrounds. The living room and dining room had full height windows or French doors to the front porch. The rear master bedroom and front bedroom had triple arched windows with sloping sills: their sash had been removed by the time the building was inspected. The inner front bedroom retained one of the "Rollaway Screens" originally specified for all windows. Sash was described in specifications as sugar pine. Bathroom windows were specified as obscure glass, basement windows as obscure wire glass.

**6. Decorative features and trim:**

a. The most notable decorative features were the beamed and vaulted living room ceiling and the arched living room doors, described above.

b. There were two fireplaces, one in the southwest corner of the living room, and one on the east wall of the office. The decorative mantels and facings of both had been removed by the time the building was inspected. The living room fireplace was set diagonally in the corner, and had a plastered overmantel that sloped upward to meet the ceiling between the first two box beams. The office fireplace was set flush into the wall, with flat wall space above the mantel.

c. The elaborate master bathroom had tiled arches enclosing the shower and bathtub, and the walls and ceiling of each enclosure were entirely surfaced in tile.

d. Woodwork of interest included angular stepped 4" baseboards, and scallops on the bottom edges of the kitchen cabinets and valances in the outer office.

**7. Hardware:** Interior doors had round brass knobs, streamlined with concentric grooves. Very little hardware survived at the time the property was inspected.

**8. Mechanical equipment:**

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: In addition to the two fireplaces, every room originally had a radiator set into a wall recess: only one radiator, disconnected, was present when the property was seen.

b. Lighting: Most rooms had a ceiling fixture, operated by a wall switch near the door. Only the bases or wires survived by the time the property was inspected. In addition, all rooms were well supplied with wall outlets, often two per wall. Electrical panels were located in the inner office and in the basement.

c. Plumbing: The main floor had a kitchen sink, and three bathrooms with sink, toilet, and shower and/or tub. The basement was equipped for an industrial size washing machine, as well as a bathroom.

**9. Original furnishings:** Built-in items of interest were a cedar closet in the inner front bedroom, a tile-clad metal-lined laundry chute in the small north bathroom, and corner shelves (missing, but cornices and ghosts remained) in the dining room. Movable fixtures included a desk-size telephone switchboard in the outer office, and big washers, dryer, and ironer in the basement.

**PHASE 4: SOUTH WING ADDITION, 1950-51 (BUILDINGS #1-2; PHOTOS E-1 to E-3), and NORTH WING ADDITION, 1950-51 (BUILDINGS #5-6; PHOTO 3, right)**

**Description of Exterior**

1. **Overall dimensions:** The 1951 additions comprised a pair of one story and basement buildings at the southeast corner of the property, and a pair at the north end. Each had motel units, carports, and a storefront, and flanked a sunken driveway.

The south buildings were each about 110' deep by 30' wide, essentially mirror twin apartment buildings with basement carports, facing each other across a driveway about 20' wide. They were parallel but somewhat offset, following the angle of the lot. The south one had a one story storefront attached to its front, flush with the sidewalk, with a stucco belltower on the north side of the storefront.

The north pair were unlike, a 2-story apartment building with storefront, about 240' deep by 30' wide, along the north property line, facing a one story carport structure about 200' x 20' back to back with the north wing of the north court, its roof about level with the floors of the north court.

2. **Foundations:** Foundations were reinforced concrete, varying in height with the slope of the site. At the front of the south unit where there was not enough clearance to drive in, the partial basement was originally used for storage, and later converted to additional living units.

3. **Walls:** Exterior walls of the dwelling units, storefronts, and bell tower were stucco over wood frame. The bases of the storefronts were faced with glazed ceramic tile, horizontally striped green and orange (later painted over). The north carport building was reinforced concrete.

4. **Structural system, framing:** The residential buildings were wood frame and stucco, with Sanborn maps showing concrete block partitions about the middle of the south buildings, and concrete block end walls where the storefronts were attached.

5. **Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads:** The three residential buildings had continuous porches or balconies to all the elevated units, i.e. the main floors of the south buildings and the second floor of the north building. Balconies were six to eight steps up from street level. The steps had quarry tile treads and tile risers, the tile orange and green striped like the storefront bases; they also had railings matching those on the earlier units (twisted uprights, molded handrails). Beyond the steps, the balconies had plainer wrought iron railings, which were replacements dating from a 1966 permit to "remove stucco handrail from porch and replace with metal handrail." Balconies were paved with asphalt. At the rear were suspended concrete steps to driveway level.

6. **Chimneys:** Each unit appeared to have a metal stovepipe on the roof.

7. **Openings:** Each motel unit had a front door, a large front window to the living room, and a smaller front kitchen window opening onto the balcony, as well as rear bathroom and bedroom windows.

a. **Doorways and doors:** Front doors to the units were set in narrow wood frames. Storefront entries were around the sides of the buildings, narrow glazed doors under flared sheet metal canopies.

b. **Windows:** Windows that were seen on the residential units were steel sash casement with cranks, in narrow wood frames. The storefronts had large plate glass show windows facing the street: sash was not visible.

**8. Roof:**

a. Shape, covering: All three residential buildings had flat roofs, of wood sheathing covered with tar and gravel. The storefronts had tiled shed roofs, sloping toward the street.

b. Cornice, eaves: The flat roofs had extremely wide eaves on all sides, sheltering the balconies on the sides with the entries. Soffits were lined with boards creating strong parallel horizontal lines. Small rectangular light fixtures were set flush into the soffits. The tile roofs of the storefronts, unlike the tile roofs on the older units, had no overhangs.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: The south bell tower, symbol of the Mission Motel in its advertising ("Look for the Tower"), rose from the roof of the south storefront, the highest point on the property, to a height of perhaps 30'. It was white stucco, with a solid rectangular stem, a belfry with arched cutouts on all four sides, and an arched tile roof with flared sides and molded eaves. There was formerly a concrete bell suspended from a beam in the belfry. This tower was a twin of the older north bell tower, except that its stem was taller and it was rotated 90 degrees so that the tiled surface of the roof, not the gable end, faced the street.

**Description of Interior**

1. **Floor plans:** There were 16 original units in the south addition (6 in the south building, 10 in the north), and 21 units on the two levels of the north addition. Each unit had a kitchen and living room in front, with the bathroom and bedroom in back. The front door opened into a corner of the living room, and the kitchen door opened off the living room, near the front door. One unit in the southernmost building was opened for inspection.

2. **Stairways:** N/A

3. **Flooring:** The unit seen had oak flooring in the living room.

4. **Wall and ceiling finish:** Interior walls and ceilings were painted plaster, without ceiling moldings or baseboards. In the unit seen, adjoining one of the concrete block party walls, the kitchen wall over the sink was painted concrete block.

**5. Openings:**

a. Doorways and doors: Doorways between rooms were plain rectangular openings with flattened half round moldings. Doors seen were flush doors with plain round knobs.

b. Windows: Windows seen were steel casement, in plain smooth plaster openings.

6. **Decorative features and trim:** Decorative features seen were colored tile in the kitchen and scalloped moldings over the tops of the kitchen cabinets.

7. **Hardware:** Interior and exterior doors had plain round knobs. Kitchen drawer pulls were plain nickel-plated elliptical handles.

**8. Mechanical equipment:**

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The living room had a gas heater on the inner wall.

9. **Original furnishings:** Only bathroom and kitchen fixtures remained.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### **A. Original Architectural Drawings**

Plans on file with the City of Oakland Office of Planning and Building under permit numbers A72250 (1938, south court) and B7904 (1945, north court).

Sketch plans on permit applications (microfiche filed by address), City of Oakland Office of Planning and Building: permits B56247 (1955, office addition) and C29075 (1966, additions and alterations).

#### **B. Early Views**

Postcard, photo, c.1939, Oakland History Room, Oakland Public Library.  
Postcard, drawing, between 1945 and 1951, Oakland History Room, Oakland Public Library.  
Photograph, 1968, Oakland City Planning Department, 701 Study, photo album of "Major Trafficways."  
Postcard, late 1970s, Oakland History Room, Oakland Public Library.

#### **C. Interviews**

Cooper, Deborah, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA, interview with anonymous Mission Motel resident of Korean War era, November 1995.

Johnson, Bernetta, daughter of Wilmer and Angela Wright, Oakhurst, CA, interviewed by Betty Marvin, January 22, 1996.

Yost, Betsy, architect, information about concrete bells, February 28, 1996.

#### **D. Bibliography**

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Oakland city assessor's block books, 1925ff, Oakland History Room, OPL.  
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Sanborn maps, 1912-51, 1953-70s, Oakland City Planning Department.

Oakland City Landmark nomination for Mission Motel, submitted by Earl Johnson, December 1994.

Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey, City of Oakland Office of Planning and Building, State Historic Resources Inventory form and research packet on Mission Motel and file on W.W. Dixon.

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Allen, Annalee, "Few Examples Remain of the Motel's Golden Era," Montclairion, Oakland CA, August 8, 1995.

Belasco, Warren James, Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945, Cambridge, MIT Press, 1979.

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Merritt, Frank C., History of Alameda County, 1928, v.2, pp.212-213 (W.W. Dixon biography).

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"Roadside Cabins for Tourists," Architectural Record, December 1933, 457-461.

Slater, Dashka, "On the Boulevard of Broken Dreams: The World within the Capri Motel," Express (Oakland, CA), November 24, 1995, pp.1, 8-17.

Sturm, William, "The Motels of Oakland," exhibit, Oakland History Room, Oakland Public Library, Fall 1995.

Vieyra, Daniel, Fill 'Er Up: An Architectural History of America's Gas Stations, New York, Collier Books, 1979.

#### **E. Sources Not Yet Investigated**

Alameda County Recorder's Office, chain of title.

additional 1930s-40s Oakland newspapers, especially travel and auto sections.

additional 1930s-40s architectural and travel periodicals.

Tourist Court Journal, industry publication much cited by Belasco and Liebs.

#### **F. Supplemental Material (attached or available)**

Attached:

~~location map and site plan~~  
~~photocopies of early postcards~~  
/ photocopies of selected plans

Available at Oakland History Room and Oakland Cultural Heritage Survey:  
field records: 35mm color photographs and videotape

#### **PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION**

The Mission Motel, which appeared eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, was demolished in January 1996 for the MacArthur Park Townhouse project of Oakland Community Housing Inc. This documentation is mitigative recording required by a Memorandum of Agreement between the City of Oakland and the California State Historic Preservation Officer.

Photographs were taken in October 1995 by Kenneth Rice Photography, 456 61st Street, Oakland California 94609. Written documentation was prepared in November-December 1995 and updated in February-March 1996 by Betty Marvin, 2646 Claremont Avenue, Berkeley, California 94705. Documentation was coordinated by Benny Kwong of Oakland Community Housing Inc.

Sketch floor plan, office-residence building (Building 7); not to scale

